



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 26 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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April 18, 2011

The Honorable Mike Feuer
California Assemblyman 42nd District
9200 Sunset Boulevard, Suite 1212
West Hollywood, CA 90069

Dear Honorable Assemblyman Feuer:

SUPPORT OF AB 73

The Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families strongly supports AB 73, your bill to open dependency court proceedings to the public. The Commission has a long history of advocating on behalf of children, and we believe your bill would help to ensure that children receive appropriate representation during dependency proceedings. The Commission has focused much of our attention on creating transparency in all proceedings that affect children's welfare. We believe that children's interests are best served when advocates and policy makers have open access to information and proceedings that impact their well being. To that end, your bill complements the work we have been doing and will benefit the children of our state.

The Commission stands with local leaders and entities that support your bill including Judge Michael Nash, the Presiding Judge of the Dependency Court in Los Angeles, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. We all believe that holding dependency proceedings in an open court, except when the judge deems it inappropriate, will lead to more quality representation and better services for children and families. We are encouraged by the success achieved by open dependency proceedings in other states, and hope that California will become a leader in this area.

Should this new policy be implemented on a pilot basis, we encourage you to consider Los Angeles County the ideal venue to pilot open court proceedings. Los Angeles County has a large and diverse caseload, and Judge Nash is very enthusiastic about piloting the project. Regardless of where this new policy is introduced, we expect that the duration of the pilot will be long enough, allowing all stakeholders to adjust to change, and to recognize the benefits of this new way of working.

We look forward to being of assistance, and are grateful for all of your efforts in securing this legislation and in giving it every opportunity to succeed.

Sincerely,

Patricia Curry, Chair
Los Angeles County
Commission for Children and Families

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c: The Honorable Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Courts
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Acting Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Children's Deputies
Legislative Deputies